

hold your head up by Val-Creative

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Summary: Richie knows he's a loser who has been in love with the same man for twenty eight years. With a lowercase L. (Post-IT 2019. Reddie. Richie Tozier/Eddie Kaspbrak.)

hold your head up

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The studio apartment creaks under Richie's feet. He's never needed anything larger, especially since Richie often disappears on his comedy shows tours and press releases, but that was all before Eddie moved in with him.

He scuffles around in the dark, flipping on the bathroom light. Richie knocks on his closed bedroom door, yawning.

"What? What is it?" Eddie answers, chest heaving, his dark hair tousled. He doesn't step out of the doorway.

"Hey, the couch is killing my back, Eds." Richie offers a sleepy, lopsided smile. "Got room for one more?"

Eddie blinks. "Sure," he says perplexed. "I mean it's your place, man."

"Thanks." As soon as Richie's inside, he sniffs. There's a very specific kind of musk clinging in the air. "Were you rubbing one out just now?" Richie mumbles, pulling off his eyeglasses. Eddie makes a loud, choking noise behind him.

"WHH—*WHHAT*?! NO!"

"Ss'okay if you were. I mean, sorry for interrupting."

"*I WASN'T*—!" An irked Eddie cuts himself off, flush-faced.

He throws his hands up, charging out. That's guilt if Richie's ever seen it. Richie doesn't follow him, shouting out a goodnight and rolling down onto the sheets. God, this is so much better. He doesn't know how Eddie can sleep with couch-lumps. If he sleeps at all. Apparently the nocturnal activities take precedent.

Richie stares up at his ceiling, brooding over this tidbit. Eddie masturbates in his bed. In *his* bed.

He rolls, yanking a sheet over himself when a silent, sullen Eddie joins him, thumping on the opposite side. Eddie *masturbates*—that shouldn't surprise Richie, but he's wondering *what* Eddie masturbates to. Couldn't be about hot lesbians. Richie doesn't even think about hot lesbians. A gay porno Eddie's seen? Weird hentai? Or... Richie?

Wishful thinking, Richie supposes. But it's a thought regardless... Eddie, *writhing*... biting down into the heel of his palm, moaning quietly, *shivering*... Eddie's hand in his pajama-pants, his thumb brushing over the wet, soft ridge of cockhead...

Richie's own dick twitches. He swallows hard, burrowing deeper under the sheets and ignoring it.

"*Richie...*?" Eddie's voice so soft and still.

He turns over, murmuring out Eddie's name and facing him. Eddie's jaw and neck covered in a bristle of dark brown hairs. His eyes half-mast. Soulful. Eddie hasn't changed by much since they were kids. He still looks at the world full of credulous belief and a quick, hot temper. Richie can't believe he ever forgot Eddie. He never wanted that.

It's like being trapped in a hazed-out state when Eddie moves in the darkness, cupping the back of Richie's head, his lips smushing up against Richie's mouth. As soon as it happens—Richie opens his eyes to sunlight, jerking up on his elbows and hearing a banging from outside.

Eddie sticks his head in, aggravated.

"Richie—he's done it again—"

"*Jesusfuck*—" Richie groans, rubbing an eye and pulling on his spectacles. He can't get a fucking break.

They've set up a loft, mostly for the need for storage space, and it had been Eddie's suggestion to make a psuedo-hammock area out of the gap of space above the couch-area and television. Heavy-duty netting. The problem is their fluffy, white cat has developed a fixation for exploring the hammock-area, and then gest himself too

scared to leave it. He mewls pathetically.

"Worms!" Richie cries out, climbing up the loft-steps. "For fuck's sake!"

Richie adopted him about two months ago. He had a serious, sickly case of feline worms when Richie first met him. The shelter's owners weren't convinced of the chances of survival, but *Richie* was. He showed Worms to Eddie, asking his opinion. Eddie had not been convinced either, but listened to Richie *swearing* when they came back, Worms would be there.

He was, de-wormed and very active, purring sweetly up against Richie's fingers poking through his cage. Worms just needed someone to *believe*.

"Daddy doesn't want you up here, bucko," Richie scolds gently, bringing him down.

"You should have named him something else... ..." Eddie says, frowning. "*Anything* else, Richie. It's the only thing he responds to."

"Hey, don't you diss my main man Worms here. He's been through a lot."

Eddie rolls his eyes, plucking Worms out of Richie's hands and cooing down at him like a baby. Nuzzling him.

Worms purrs contently, golden-yellow eyes squinting and shutting. Richie watches them head to the kitchen, vaguely wondering if Eddie's lips are as satiny-soft as his dream. *Fuck*, he is as pathetic as Worms. Wanting to chase something that scares the shit outta him.

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Beverly Hills has plenty of upscale restaurants. Richie's not picky about which one to go to since he doesn't visit any.

The Bazaar is massive and overly lit, with wacky, angular lamps and neon-red glow highlighting. Steely, rectangular dining tables.

Diamond-bright glass cases with absolutely nothing inside them. Richie feels shabby in his clean, white undershirt and charcoal jacket, his hands patting nervously over his trousers. Eddie, on the other hand, looks around dubiously.

"D'ya think they got a kid's menu?" Richie mutters, eyeing the cuisine listing propped in front of him.

"Richie..."

"Would be less expensive." Pointing that out helpfully doesn't make Eddie smile. "I can't even pronounce this shit! Jam—*Jamon iberico de blah blah blah*—" Richie gives up, tossing aside his menu, scowling, "—fuck it, let's just go to In-N-Out down the road—"

"You really want greasy burgers and fries?" Eddie muses, sipping on his *sanga roja*. "It was your idea to come here—"

"I know. I know! I don't know what I was thinking!"

(Richie was thinking about the lowkey romantic ambiance, and how Eddie's cardigan fits him damn-near perfectly, and how much Richie is a loser who has been in love with the same man for twenty eight years. With a lowercase L.)

"With you leaving New York and staying over, I—" Richie hesitates, seeing a familiar and difficult emotion cross Eddie's face. *So much* has happened. Eddie almost got skewered alive back in Derry (a very, very bad thing). He's separated from his wife (admittedly a *good* thing). "—I don't know," Richie lies, sighing and wiping his lips. "I was trying to get your mind off everything."

And just like that, Eddie *grins*. Big and bright.

"Thanks, man..."

Richie's gut warms. "Let's get outta here, seriously," he insists, nodding. "I can already tell this food is gonna give me gas."

"No matter what you eat, you're gassy," Eddie complains, pushing out his chair when Richie does. He starts talking fast-paced. "It's awful. Did you know you could have an abdominal hernia and not even

know it? Did you have bloating? An infection—"

"—*a couple of homos*—" drifts in from the table nearby.

Three men in suits leer at Richie and Eddie, each of them with a bored-looking woman in a silver-glimmer, identical dress.

"You got a problem?" Eddie speaks up, already glaring.

"No problem." A couple of snickers. "Having a date night, *ladies*?"

Richie fakes a laugh, pushing Eddie forward and away from the hecklers. "Ha, ha. Get some new material, champ."

"Should be saying that about you." One of the men stands up, letting his own apprehensive date hurries herself towards the restrooms. That, or she's gonna contact the bartender and ask for the police. "You're that *hack* comedian who got exposed for stealing his material. Too bad it's still *shit*." Richie feels his insides twisting violently. Shit, that's not his crowning achievement.

Eddie snorts.

"You could just switch the channel and go back to oogling little girls on TLC," he retorts. Eddie's glare now menacing.

"Hey, hey, alright," Richie murmurs, watching in dread as the man's face reddens. Him and his friends slide out from their table.

Another couple notices them all, signaling fearfully for a waiter.

"Eddie, c'mon. Less'go."

"Listen to your little boyfriend, *fudgepacker*—"

Eddie rears back his fist, landing a hard punch right between the first guy's nose and cheek.

He careens over, shrieking, hitting the ground. Another man punches Eddie on the mouth, and that's when Richie's senses go tail-spinning—he *screams* over Eddie *screaming* death threats to the homophobes, Richie's arms wrapping securely to Eddie's torso and lifting him off

his feet.

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It's just like when they were fourteen. That late balmy summer after IT went back to hibernation.

One of the Bowers Gang came over and hocked a fat, green loogie directly at Richie's glasses, taunting him with vulgar, horrendous slurs.

Nobody in the arcade defended Richie when it had been Henry Bowers. Nobody ever would.

But, well, *Eddie* happened to be there this time.

As an adult, Richie can still see it clearly when Eddie hollered out, right at Peter Gordon's face, kicking his shins with all of his might while he lifted by a grim-faced Richie, dragged forcibly out before they were both murdered on the spot.

I'M GONNA FUCKING KILL YOU!

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Richie slips off his jacket, feeding Worms and discovers Eddie vanished out of the apartment. He crawled out of the window onto the fire-escape's stairwell, gazing out to the city's endless, nighttime lights. The metal feels damp against Richie's fingers.

"How's it feel?" Richie questions, crouch-sitting across from him.

"It's fine."

Eddie's upper lip is little more than a blood-crust and swollen bruise. He presses on it occasionally with chunk of ice swaddled in a napkin. "You could've been hurt," Richie tells him sternly. "Even if Barf-Breath was too slow and sloshed—"

"I don't need to hear a lecture," Eddie deadpans.

"Then don't have a *goddamn* rage-out in public. You were out of control, Eddie—"

An indignant, offended noise. "*THEY'RE* the ones—"

"I know," Richie interrupts him, sounding drained and numb. "I know. I *know* who he is. I *know* the type of person he is because I *know* it's the same fucking people everywhere I go. Over and over. The same assholes who think that men attracted to men shouldn't be allowed to breathe the same air. Do you really think I *wanted* to stay in the fucking closet this long?"

"At least you weren't repressed for 41 years," Eddie says bitterly. "That's most of my life, dude."

Richie's lips curl up.

"You got your whole life ahead of you, Eds."

He means it.

"*Richie...*"

His heart thuds frantically, gaining speed, as Eddie gazes up. His dark eyes half-mast. Soulful.

"*Yeahhhh...*?" Richie whispers after a long moment, staring and unsure of what to do.

Eddie grins in pure disbelief.

"Fuck, you're taking too long," he mumbles, cupping the back of Richie's head and kissing him. All Richie can feel is Eddie's puffy, spit-hot mouth and his own heart. God, he's gonna *pass out*. Right here.

In a split-second, Eddie pulls away.

"... *Ow*," he monotones, re-pressing the ice on his bruise and laughing out at Richie's gobsmacked, flushed expression.

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IT (2019) isn't mine. Requested by raccoonsandwich (AO3): "domestic Reddie (Eddie surviving the finale and having no where to go after Myra.) Maybe with them getting in an argument over something dumb (like being mistaken as a couple while out to dinner or something), being forced to come to terms with their feelings for each other, NSFW preferred" and MoskaFleur (AO3) "romantic and sexual tension, with Eddie living with Richie." You both basically wanted a continuation of "only fools fall" but since I'm not doing continuations, I did a similiar version of the basic concept and just made a new thing! Hope you enjoy! Any comments appreciated!

((Want a request for IT? I'm doing 100-1000 word fics of any friendship or romantic ship + any prompt until I feel like quitting. Rules: you need to comment here and provide a friendship or romantic ship and prompt. You need to also specify if you want SFW or NSFW (for 18+ readers only). The only requests I'll be looking at is if you ALSO commented about the fic you just read as well. It's only fair. You came to this fic to read it and me doing something for you later on is a sweet bonus!))

((Do not ask for Reader/Character, OCs, Bowers Gang-centric or ship, Pennywise-centric or ship or underage. All characters for NSFW will be depicted as 18+ only.))